

## **CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES (located in the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives)**

Co-operatives are associations of people who own and control enterprises for their own use. Common examples include retail stores owned by consumers, housing complexes owned by tenants, financial institutions owned by depositors and borrowers, value-added enterprises owned by farmers, firms owned by employees, and so on. By definition, all co-operatives have a dual character as both democratic associations of people and as business enterprises. Discipline-based studies often concentrate on one part of the character of a co-operative: for example, studies of the co-operative business through Economics, Agricultural Economics, or Commerce; or studies of participation and leadership through Sociology, Political Studies, and the like. The interdisciplinary thematic concentration in Co-operative Studies provides a framework for students to combine different perspectives and disciplines for a more holistic understanding of co-operatives as both enterprises and associations. This holistic perspective is even more critical in those cases where a third element is added in: community. Co-operatives are connected to their communities both through their business and through their membership/governance structure. In both aspects, they are affected by complex phenomena such as globalization. Co-operative studies grounded in community settings, and looking at interactions of social, economic, cultural, and political change, are of particular interest in this concentration and pose special challenges of integration and interdisciplinarity.

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